

Amendments to the Claims:

The Listing of Claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A directory service comprising a plurality of records associating product identification strings with batch identifications for corresponding products, wherein a product type has a plurality of associated product identification strings associated with different batches of the product type and wherein the corresponding products are provided with a machine readable label including an associated one of the product identification strings and wherein the directory services include records for products from different vendors;

a directory services query module that is configured to identify a vendor associated with a received batch status request and determine if corresponding records for the identified vendor are available locally and to identify a remote directory service having the corresponding records independent of information contained in the received batch status request; and

a network interface that is configured to access the remote directory service having the corresponding records based on the identification of the remote directory service.

2. (Original) The directory service of Claim 1 wherein the product identification strings comprise bar code values and the machine readable labels comprise bar code labels.

3. (Currently amended) The directory service of Claim 1 wherein the records further comprise status information associated with the different batches and ~~further comprising an input interface~~ wherein the directory services query module is configured to receive [[a]] the batch status request from a user and to provide the status information to the user responsive to the received batch status request.

4-5. Canceled.

6. (Currently amended) A method of communicating product status information comprising:

maintaining a record of a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product;

transmitting a batch status request to a directory service maintaining batch status information at selected intervals and/or responsive to a user request; and

receiving the requested batch status information for the product, wherein the received batch status information includes a certification of a trusted entity providing the batch status information and/or a signature of an inspecting authority generating the batch status information.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6 wherein the batch status request includes no personal information of the user.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 6 further comprising scanning a product label of the product to obtain the product identification string.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein transmitting a batch status request comprises transmitting a batch status request for the product identification string responsive to scanning of the product label.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 9 wherein maintaining a record comprises maintaining a temporary record of the product identification string while transmitting the batch status request.

11. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein receiving the requested batch status

information is followed by communicating the batch status information to the user.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 11 wherein the batch status information indicates a recall of the product and wherein communicating the batch status information to the user comprises notifying the user of the recall.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein maintaining a record comprises maintaining a plurality of records of product identification strings associated with a plurality of products of the user.

14. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 13 further comprising registering the user with [[a]] the trusted entity and wherein transmitting a batch status request comprises transmitting batch status requests for the plurality of products to the trusted entity and receiving the requested batch status information comprises receiving batch status information for the plurality of products from the trusted entity.

15. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 14 wherein the received batch status information includes [[a]] the certification of the trusted entity.

16. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 14 wherein the received batch status information includes [[a]] the signature of [[an]] the inspecting authority generating the batch status information.

17. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 13 wherein transmitting a batch status request comprises transmitting batch status requests for different ones of the products to different entities and wherein receiving the requested batch status information comprises receiving batch status information for respective products from the different entities, and wherein the received batch status information includes certifications of a plurality of the different entities.

18. Canceled.

19. (Currently amended) The method of Claim 17 wherein the received batch status information includes [[a]] the signature of an inspecting authority generating the batch status information.

20. (Original) The method of Claim 8 wherein scanning a product label comprises scanning the product label using a consumer appliance.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 20 wherein the consumer appliance comprises a cooking appliance and wherein receiving the batch status information is followed by notifying the user if the batch status information indicates a recall of the product.

22. (Original) The method of Claim 21 further comprising maintaining a record of recalled products at the cooking appliance and wherein scanning a product label comprises scanning the product label if a user attempts to cook the product in the cooking appliance and wherein the method further comprises notifying a user of the cooking appliance of a recall if a user attempts to cook a recalled product in the cooking appliance.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 20 wherein the consumer appliance comprises a food storage appliance and wherein receiving the batch status information is followed by notifying the user if the batch status information indicates a recall of the product.

24. (Original) The method of Claim 23 further comprising maintaining a record of recalled products at the food storage appliance and wherein scanning a product label comprises scanning the product label if a user attempts to store the product in the food storage appliance and wherein the method further comprises notifying a user of the food storage appliance of a recall if a user attempts to store a recalled product in the food storage

appliance.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 20 wherein the consumer appliance comprises an information appliance.

26. (Currently amended) [[The]] A method of ~~Claim 6~~ communicating product status information comprising:

maintaining a record of a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product;

transmitting a batch status request to a directory service maintaining batch status information at selected intervals and/or responsive to a user request; and

receiving the requested batch status information for the product;

wherein maintaining a record comprises maintaining a plurality of records of product identification strings associated with a plurality of products of the user and wherein the method further comprises:

scanning a plurality of machine readable labels associated with the products of the user at a purchase location; and

generating a sales receipt including a machine readable label configured to allow retrieval of the product identification strings for the scanned plurality of machine readable labels.

27. (Original) The method of Claim 26 further comprising scanning the machine readable label of the sales receipt to obtain the product identification strings for the scanned plurality of machine readable labels and wherein maintaining a record includes maintaining records for the obtained product identification strings.

28. (Currently amended) [[The]] A method of ~~Claim 6~~ communicating product status information comprising:

maintaining a record of a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product;

transmitting a batch status request to a directory service maintaining batch status information at selected intervals and/or responsive to a user request; and

receiving the requested batch status information for the product;

wherein maintaining a record comprises maintaining a plurality of records of product identification strings associated with a plurality of products of the user and wherein the method further comprises:

scanning a user brand loyalty card and/or bank card at a purchase location;

scanning a plurality of machine readable labels associated with the products of the user at a purchase location; and

associating product identification strings for the scanned plurality of machine readable labels with the scanned user brand loyalty card and/or bank card to allow retrieval of the product identification strings for the scanned plurality of machine readable labels.

29. (Original) The method of Claim 28 further comprising scanning the user brand loyalty card to obtain the product identification strings for the scanned plurality of machine readable labels and wherein maintaining a record includes maintaining records for the obtained product identification strings.

30. (Original) The method of Claim 28 further comprising obtaining the product identification strings for the scanned plurality of machine readable labels from a provider of the bank card and wherein maintaining a record includes maintaining records for the obtained product identification strings.

31. (Currently amended) A method of communicating product status information comprising:

receiving from a requestor a batch status request including a product identification

string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product, wherein the batch status request includes no personal information of the use and no identification of a source of batch identification information for the product;

identifying a vendor associated with the product ;

identifying a remote directory service that is the source of batch identification information for the product;

querying [[a]] the remote directory service, which includes ~~including~~ a plurality of records associating product identification strings with batch identifications for corresponding products, wherein a product type has a plurality of associated product identification strings associated with different batches of the product type and wherein the corresponding products are provided with a machine readable label including an associated one of the product identification strings, to obtain the requested batch status information; and

transmitting the obtained batch status information for the product to the requestor.

32-34. Canceled.

35. (Currently amended) A system for communicating product status information comprising:

means for maintaining a record of a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product;

means for transmitting a batch status request to a directory service maintaining batch status information at selected intervals and/or responsive to a user request; and

means for receiving the requested batch status information for the product, wherein the received batch status information includes a certification of a trusted entity providing the batch status information and/or a signature of an inspecting authority generating the batch status information.

36. (Original) The system of Claim 35 wherein the batch status request includes no identification of the user.

37. (Original) The system of Claim 35 further comprising means for scanning a product label of the product to obtain the product identification string.

38. (Currently amended) A system for communicating product status information comprising:

means for receiving from a requestor a batch status request including a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product, wherein the batch status request includes no personal information of the user and no identification of a source of batch identification information for the product;

means for identifying a vendor associated with the product ;

means for identifying a remote directory service that is the source of batch identification information for the product;;

means for querying [[a]] the remote directory service, which includes ~~including~~ a plurality of records associating product identification strings with batch identifications for corresponding products, wherein a product type has a plurality of associated product identification strings associated with different batches of the product type and wherein the corresponding products are provided with a machine readable label including an associated one of the product identification strings, to obtain the requested batch status information; and

means for transmitting the obtained batch status information for the product to the requestor.

39. (Currently amended) A computer program product for communicating product status information, comprising:

a computer readable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein, the computer readable program code comprising:

computer readable program code configured to maintain a record of a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product;

computer readable program code configured to transmit a batch status request to a directory service maintaining batch status information at selected intervals and/or responsive to a user request; and

computer readable program code configured to receive the requested batch status information for the product, wherein the received batch status information includes a certification of a trusted entity providing the batch status information and/or a signature of an inspecting authority generating the batch status information.

40. (Currently amended) A computer program product for communicating product status information, comprising:

a computer readable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein, the computer readable program code comprising:

computer readable program code configured to receive from a requestor a batch status request including a product identification string associated with a product of a user, the product identification string being associated with a corresponding batch of the product, wherein the batch status request includes no personal information of the user and no identification of a source of batch identification information for the product;

computer readable program code configured to identify a vendor associated with the product ;

computer readable program code configured to identify a remote directory service that is the source of batch identification information for the product;;

computer readable program code configured to query ~~[[a]]~~ the remote directory service, which includes ~~including~~ a plurality of records associating product identification strings with batch identifications for corresponding products, wherein a product type has a plurality of associated product identification strings associated with different batches of the product type and wherein the corresponding products are provided with a machine readable

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label including an associated one of the product identification strings, to obtain the requested batch status information; and

computer readable program code configured to transmit the obtained batch status information for the product to the requestor.

41. Canceled.